



MOVING PHILADELPHIA FORWARD

A PATH TOWARDS STRENGTHENING
FOOD ACCESS IN OUR COMMUNITY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUGUST 2012
**MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON
OUTDOOR SERVING OF FOOD**



PRESENTED TO
**MICHAEL A. NUTTER, MAYOR
& THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**



TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Mayor's Task Force on Outdoor Serving of Food

Arthur C. Evans, Jr., Chair

Commissioner, Department of Behavioral Health
and Intellectual disAbility Services

Councilwoman Jannie L. Blackwell

City Council, City of Philadelphia

William J. Clark

President and Executive Director, Philabundance

Andre Cureton

Former Consumer of Outdoor Food Services
Daytime Program Supervisor, Bethesda Project

Ronnie Desesso

Former Consumer of Outdoor Food Services, Volunteer,
Journey of Hope and St. John's Hospice.

J. Louis Felton

Pastor, The Mt. Airy Church of God in Christ

Bill Golderer

Convening Minister, Broad Street Ministry,
Pastor, Arch Street Presbyterian Church

Mary Horstmann

Deputy Director, Office of Policy Planning
and Coordination, Mayor's Office

George Matysik

Deputy Director Policy and Planning, Philabundance

Dick McMillen

Executive Director/CEO, Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission

Joye L. Presson

Chief of Staff, City of Philadelphia
Office of Supportive Housing

Joseph Rogers

Former Consumer of Outdoor Food Services
Chief Advocacy Officer, MHASP

Salomon Vazquez

Outdoor Food Provider, The Connect Church

Beatriz F. Vieira

Vice President, Philanthropic Services, Philadelphia Foundation

Dear Mayor Nutter,

In May of 2012, you convened this 90-day Task Force on Outdoor Serving of Food to increase access to indoor food services in Center City and develop recommendations to better serve and assist individuals who experience hunger and food insecurity, reaffirming the City's commitment to the health, safety, and well-being of all Philadelphians. Serving and sharing food has always been a powerful symbol of inclusion, conciliation, and goodwill. Accordingly, the Task Force believes the way in which we serve our neighbors in need reflects the regard in which we hold them as individuals and as members of the community. We believe, through a unified effort, all Philadelphians can have secure access to nutritious foods and vital services in healthy settings—and that ensuring this access will honor our best traditions as the City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection. To that end, the members of this Task Force are prepared to assist you and the City in the fight against hunger.

Poverty and hunger have been intractable concerns in our City for many years. A remarkable number of dedicated, kind-hearted individuals and groups have established meal service operations at various places and times in Philadelphia to address those needs, and to use food to reach out to individuals in need. We honor and respect the very important work accomplished by the people who serve, and we recognize the tension that has sometimes formed between their laudable efforts and the challenges of accommodating those efforts. This tension is not irresolvable, however, and not without precedent in our City.

Philadelphia has a rich history of independence and innovation used to advance the quality of life for all its citizens. In 1739, the charismatic preacher George Whitefield traveled to Philadelphia to begin his preaching tour of the New World. No church could accommodate the thousands of listeners his compelling sermons attracted, so Reverend Whitefield preached outdoors. The community soon found itself stuck between the great desire of its citizens to hear the preacher, and the material challenges posed by hosting him. The “unsticking” of this issue came in the form of a new space and a new way of doing things. The community banded together to erect the New Building—a new shared space for everyone's use. When Reverend Whitefield's visit came to an end, the new space and what it represented remained. The New Building became a charitable school, and later hosted the beginning of the University of Pennsylvania, the country's first university and an indelible feature of Philadelphia's rich history and culture.

We, the Task Force, propose the establishment of a New Space in Philadelphia for the fight against hunger—a space that is not just physical, but also conceptual. A need exists for both physical space and for willingness to approach the problem of hunger in novel and unaccustomed ways, and to that end the Task Force has set forth recommendations. Making lasting improvements to our community's response to hunger will require the same concerted effort that the construction of the New Building did, but such an effort is no more outside our capabilities today than it was in 1739.

Sincerely,



Arthur C. Evans, Ph.D., Task Force Chair
Commissioner, Department of Behavioral Health and disAbility Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May of 2012, Mayor Nutter convened individuals from City departments, philanthropic and faith-based organizations, foundations, and individuals who have used free food services in Philadelphia for a 90-day Task Force. Mayor Nutter charged them with developing recommendations on how to serve more individuals indoors and to better serve and assist individuals who experience hunger and food insecurity. Serving and sharing of food is a powerful symbol of inclusion, goodwill, and community. The Task Force universally agreed that, as a City, we can improve the current state of free food services, both indoor and outdoor, to better address the significant number of people who experience hunger and food insecurity in Philadelphia. Thus, the group examined methods to increase access to indoor meal options, how we as a City can help to connect individuals who experience hunger to resources to stabilize their lives, become self-sufficient and reduce food insecurity, as well as examine the broader issues surrounding hunger that lead people to seek free meals.

Although issues of food insecurity and hunger are complex, we believe access to free food services is a solvable challenge. This will require a unified effort in Philadelphia. Philadelphia has a rich history of innovation used to advance the quality of life for all its citizens and we believe the issue of hunger requires us to approach this issue in a new way. Through a new approach, we believe we can create a new space, both physically and metaphorically, where all Philadelphians can have secure access to nutritious foods and vital services in healthy settings.

Five Main Recommendations

The Task Force identified five main recommendations that will help to move the City forward in its effort to increase access to food indoors. The Task Force found these five recommendations a comprehensive approach to a complex and difficult yet, solvable issue.

1. **Establish consensus, leadership & capacity to move the City forward to address hunger and food insecurity.**
 - Engage providers in a collaborative process to establish a trusting, working partnership
 - Establish a coordinating body to lead initiatives that address issues of hunger
 - Lead efforts to coordinate food services, provider organizations and volunteers
 - Establish effective methods to disseminate information
 - Identify existing resources and services
 - Assist in providing information and training
 - Designate a full-time dedicated person in the City to track and lead the recommendations set forth in this report
 - Lead ongoing data collection in collaboration with coordinating body
2. **Increase and improve food access, options, and other needed services and supports for individuals in need.**
 - Establish methods to increase enrollment in food assistance programs
 - Increase access to variety and choice of food
 - Advocate for state and federal policy changes that reduce restrictions on food access programs
 - Increase access to basic services (e.g., restroom and shower facilities)
 - Increase access to supportive and social services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. Use existing infrastructure and resources to build additional capacity for addressing issues of hunger and food insecurity.
 - Strengthen current indoor food serving organizations
 - Engage philanthropic and business organizations to assist in funding and sustainability
 - Expand existing innovative food service models
4. Create opportunities for organizations and the public to better help individuals in need.
 - Equip providers and the public with necessary skills to help individuals in need
 - Remove barriers to providing food indoors
5. Establish innovative food serving models to increase access to food indoors and address food insecurity.
 - Establish a “new space” that offers a safe, healthy environment for individuals to access food with indoor and outdoor seating options
 - Utilize unused and underutilized indoor space to serve food
 - Establish innovative, integrated models
 - Participate in federal food access demonstration projects

Basis for Recommendation

In order to better understand the issues that led to the Task Force recommendations, the Task Force believed it was vital to collect information on the use and capacity of free food services, both indoors and outdoors, in Philadelphia. The Task Force solicited the perspectives of individuals involved in all aspects of serving and sharing of food. The input of individuals who use free meal services was particularly valued and specifically sought.

We acknowledge that this information is from a snapshot in time and thus, may not provide a completely accurate picture of the guests served. Nor does it reflect the array of meal service that the Task Force knows is happening all across the City. The data does provide additional insights into the issues of food insecurity. Given the limited time of the Task Force, we focused our information gathering on Center City, although we believe our findings have applications to other areas in the city.

Here are some key facts identified from those surveys and observations (more details are provided in the Information Gathering Section in the report):

- There appears to be a range between 19 and 200 people per meal being served outdoors in Center City, with a daily average between 33 to 129 people per meal. Given that information was collected during the City's new regulations on meal services, and the fact that the number of outdoor food services fluctuates during the week, it is difficult to determine the exact number of meals served each week. In some instances, guests receive multiple meals at a single outdoor serving and most guests frequent more than one outdoor food service per week. We are also aware of individuals being served outdoors in other parts of the City, such as Hunting Park and Kensington, but lacked the time to investigate this further.
- Significant numbers of free meals are being provided at 23 indoor locations in Center City, approximately 1,859 meals each day. With increased resources, these organizations have the physical capacity to serve 50 percent more meals than are currently provided.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- While the indoor provider data, taken together with observations of outdoor meal sites, suggests that the existing indoor provider locations could serve those who are currently using outdoor meal sites with increased resources, the recommendations include the addition of new indoor space to be established not due to physical capacity needs, but for several other reasons discussed in this report (e.g., allowing individual and provider choice).
- Individuals seeking meals outdoors tended to be overwhelmingly male, African American, and middle aged, although they ranged in age from 20 to 81 years old.
- The slim majority of the 83 people surveyed live on the street. Those not living on the street either lived at a shelter, stayed with friends or relatives, or some combination of these options. Very few of those surveyed had a permanent residence. Most did not have a place to prepare food, which likely speaks to issues of habitability or access to a kitchen.
- Many individuals rely on both the indoor and outdoor food system for meals. Individuals report using an average of nine (8.7) free meals per week.
- Less than half are currently enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); slightly over half of those not enrolled believe they are eligible for food stamps.
- Individuals travel from across the City to take advantage of indoor and outdoor emergency food assistance. The average person interviewed traveled almost two miles, with some traveling more than eight miles. Most individuals were traveling from either within Center City or from West Philadelphia to Center City.
- While participating individuals indicated that both indoor and outdoor sites had advantages and drawbacks, many expressed a preference for indoor sites, provided that they were safe, orderly, and dignified.

Six Core Issues

The Task Force recommendations were also based on the identification of six core issues that drive the current use and provision of outdoor meal services. While over 400,000 people in Philadelphia experience food insecurity at any given time, the core issues focus on the experience of individuals primarily seeking food services in the Center City district. The issues described below were evidenced from information gathered through the Task Force, as well as other reports and information available. For each core issue, we recognized the complexity driving the issue.

1. Individual Needs

Individuals require comprehensive services ranging from access to food to basic necessities to services that foster autonomy and independence.

2. Provider Needs

Outdoor free food providers in Philadelphia have a long history of commitment and service. Providers will need assistance to continue their commitment to help individuals in need, including support to serve food indoors.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. Capacity & Infrastructure

Increased resources and expanded infrastructure are needed to provide food services indoors.

4. Cooperation, Coordination & Collaboration

Duplication of free food services and gaps exist in the availability of free food.

5. Resources & Sustainability

Addressing hunger and food insecurity are complex issues that require sustained efforts.

6. Community Consensus and Unity

A shared vision and consensus is needed across the Philadelphia community on how to best serve individuals who experience hunger and food insecurity.

To address the issues highlighted above and ensure the successful implementation of the recommendations, the Task Force considered how best to oversee the ongoing efforts of the City and its partners to increase access to indoor meal services and better serve individuals who experience hunger and food insecurity. We have begun conversations with community and City leaders around these recommendations and include several immediate action steps.

We hope that the information gathered and the proposed recommendations in this report become a framework for moving the city forward around this, and a catalyst for continued conversation and implementation of strategies. Once again, we believe this is a solvable issue, one that requires our City to work together to better address the significant number of people who experience hunger and food insecurity in Philadelphia.